

**NOWELL BRISCOE**  
Columnist

## Monroe's 'first lady' of food

This is the time of year when parties, soirees and events in Monroe seem to be a weekly occurrence — where tables sag heavy with beautiful arrangements of meats, vegetables, rolls, pastries, sauces and desserts of every description.

For me it brings back the memory of Louelle Conyers, Monroe's acknowledged "First Lady" of food and Monroe's first caterer.

At her funeral service on Oct. 18, 1981, in Monroe, the tributes to her culinary skills were eloquent testimony to what she loved to do best: cook. Back in the day, whenever a large party or gathering was being planned, Louelle was the first person the host or hostess contacted. Due to the high demand for her services, often times an event would have to be rescheduled to fit in with the busy schedule on Louelle's calendar. Louelle's clients knew even if an event had to be pushed ahead by a week or two, the event would already be considered a success because she was in charge of the food.

The late Lois Grimes, one of the *Tribune's* editors, once said that any accurate account of Monroe's history would have to include a page on Louelle Conyers and what she meant to the community for much of her 94 years as a superb cook, which later led to her career overseeing so many of Monroe's social functions.

Louelle Hill was born on Alcovia Street on June 12, 1887. In an early *Tribune* interview with her back in the 1960s, she remembered when Broad Street was unpaved and there were a number of saloons operating in the downtown area. The house where she was born, in close conjunction to the property the American Legion stands on, is still standing after all these many years.

Louelle attended school in Monroe and married Newton County native Boyd "Buddy" Conyers, who moved to Monroe at an early age. Back in the early 1920s both Louelle, husband Buddy and his brother, Henry "Monk" Conyers, all worked for my grandparents on Edwards Street. Louelle oversaw my grandparent's kitchen while Buddy and Monk worked for my grandfather at his cotton office as well as caring for the Edwards Street house and grounds. When Monk died after a sudden illness at a comfortable age, it was my grandfather who paid the funeral bill to The E. L. Almand Company, of whom it was later said, "laid the old gentleman away in style."

See **NOWELL**, Page C5

*Nowell Briscoe is a former Monroe resident living in Atlanta. He can be reached at [nowellbriscoe@bellsouth.net](mailto:nowellbriscoe@bellsouth.net).*

## History lessons with a simple wooden chair

Cox fought in Civil War, belongings discovered

By **STEPHEN MILLIGAN**  
Staff Writer  
[stephen.milligan@waltontribune.com](mailto:stephen.milligan@waltontribune.com)

First Lt. John J. Cox was just one of many soldiers who left Walton County to fight in the Civil War raging across the shattered Union for the cause of the newly christened Confederacy.

A member of the Georgia 42nd regiment, Company H — "The Walton Tigers" — part of the Georgia Brigade, Cox fought across the southeast, fighting at Cumberland Gap and Vicksburg, handing Gen. Ulysses S. Grant his first loss of the war before fighting in the long retreat toward Atlanta.

Wounded Nov. 25, 1863, in battle at Missionary Ridge, Cox was furloughed home and wasn't there when Sherman's march to the sea consigned Atlanta to the flames. He died in 1923 and was buried in the Cox Family Cemetery next to his wife, Susan, in the county.

Now, 150 years after Cox fired his last shot in the South's failed rebellion, a piece of his service has returned to Walton County.

Robert Elliott, of Grayson, is the great-great-grandson of a soldier in the Georgia 42nd out of Newton County, and the current historian for the company as part of the General Barton and Stovall History and Heritage Association, which celebrates the Georgia Brigade.

A serious collector of Civil War memorabilia, Elliott was searching through eBay in April when he found a Civil War-era camp chair on auction — one belonging to a First Lt. J.J. Cox, of the Georgia 42nd.

"I saw it and I was floored," Elliott said. "It was total euphoria. This is the type of item you generally don't see. It's considered extremely rare."

While Elliott has collected a host of various items from the era — photographs and letters are his specialty, but other objects proliferate in his collection — a camp chair is a rare find as few of them survived over the years.

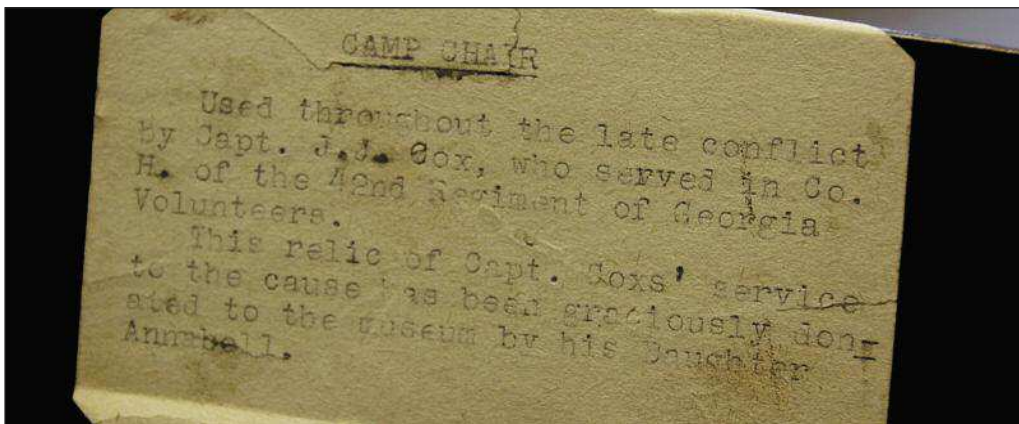
So when he found the chair — with a tag he suspects is ivory on the back bearing Cox's name, rank and company — he called the seller to find out its provenance.

"The seller said he's had it in his collection for a long time," Elliott said. "There's an old museum tag on the front, so it was donated to an institution at some point, but the seller said he got it from another collector."

And Elliott said the seller was pleased to hear from him.

"He told me, 'I hope to God you win this chair because I want it to go back to Georgia,'" Elliott said.

After some spirited bidding, Elliott managed to secure the chair and, once he received it in the mail, he began to search for the original owner.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

**Top, the camp chair once belonging to First Lt. John J. Cox stand before his grave in the Cox Family Cemetery. Above, the label on the chair from a museum where the chair was once donated.**

"After I won the chair, I searched with a friend and we found the gravesite," Elliott said. "We went out there and took pictures of the gravestone and the chair together."

Now, with the chair in his possession, Elliott is working to pin down the journey it took.

"I wish I could pinpoint which museum it had been in," Elliott said. "It's kind of amazing it ended up in North Carolina before it came to me."

He's also looking for Cox's descendants in order to share the chair's discovery with them.

"I'd love to see if there are any family members related to J.J. Cox still in the area," Elliott said. "We want to do a ceremony at the grave with a full

honor guard."

The connection to his ancestor's own regiment makes it an even better find, Elliott said.

"I can guarantee you this guy was sitting in this chair talking with my great-great-grandfather at some point," Elliott said.

For now, though, the collector is relishing his biggest find — one that dwarfs the tintypes, ambrotypes and other photos that make up the majority of his collection of Georgia war memorabilia — even if he's not prepared to truly claim it is as his own.

"I don't consider it my property," Elliott said. "I'm just the caretaker. I'd like to see it back in a museum one day."

## Fighting against abuse through the power of words

Helping women say no through her book

By **RACHAEL WARD**  
Staff Writer  
[rachael.ward@waltontribune.com](mailto:rachael.ward@waltontribune.com)

MONROE — Cheryl Seagraves is a firm believer in going to a job you love every day. So at age of 31, she's completely changed the course of her life to meet that belief.

**Cheryl Seagraves gave up her job as a Walmart manager to put pen to paper in her first novel 'Life After Love.'**

Photo by  
**RACHAEL WARD**



In less than a year, Seagraves went from a department manager at Walmart to a self-published author and contributing writer for Yahoo. Earlier this month she released her first book, a romance novel called "Life After Love."

Even though the book is fictional, there is a lot of Seagraves' real life experiences in the pages, including dealing with physical abuse from a past marriage.

"The book is about a young mother who leaves her abusive husband on his birthday," she said. "It's a realistic romance novel from the voice of someone who chose to leave and not stay."

To write her book, Seagraves recreated and dug deep to recall memories

from a decade ago when she took her children out of the abusive situation she was facing.

"I know what it's like to leave and live in a shelter with your kids and how it feels to do that on your own — and it's fulfilling," she said. "I want my journey in these pages to be inspirational."

Not only is this book an avenue to explore her love for writing, it's to help those who may be dealing with abuse of any form.

"I want women to know comfort can be found in strangers in a situation like this," she said. "I really do hope they read this story and know leaving is not as hard as they think it is. You

See **AUTHOR**, Page C4